



RESEARCH
PROGRAM ON
Forests, Trees and
Agroforestry



Landscapes' dynamics through the lens of rural institutions

How feasible is the landscape
approach?

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Purpose of the research

- Better understand the socio-political and institutional drivers of changes in landscapes
- Obtain results that could be analyzed and compared across landscapes
- Better identify and characterize existing bottlenecks and rooms for manoeuver
 - Better understanding for better action designing

Focus

■ Two main research objects

- *Institutions* that govern access, uses and exploitation of Natural Resources
 - Institutions can be defined as the “*humanly devised constraints that structure political, economic and social interactions*” (North 1990)
- *Social and political mechanisms* relating to the use of the ecosystem, which participate in designing specific forms of NR governance
 - Among which, related to forestry, agriculture, cattle raising, firewood collection, nature conservation, mining, etc...

Methodological choices

■ Design of an original protocol

- There is no 'one-fits-all' protocol for institutional mapping
- From an epistemological standpoint, analyzing the same situation with 2 different objects and objectives is complex

■ Mixed methods approach

- Survey (at the landscape level)
 - Mapping institutions
 - Assessing NR governance from the stakeholders' perspective and based on the 'Good Governance Principles'
- Case study (at the community level)
 - In-depth analyzing institutions and social and political processes that translate into specific practices related to NR



Insights from the
institutional
mapping in the
Nicaragua-
Honduras
Sentinel
Landscape



The landscape

■ Location



■ Major characteristics

A bi-national territory around the centerpieces of the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor

- Including two Biosphere Reserves
- Home to various indigenous groups

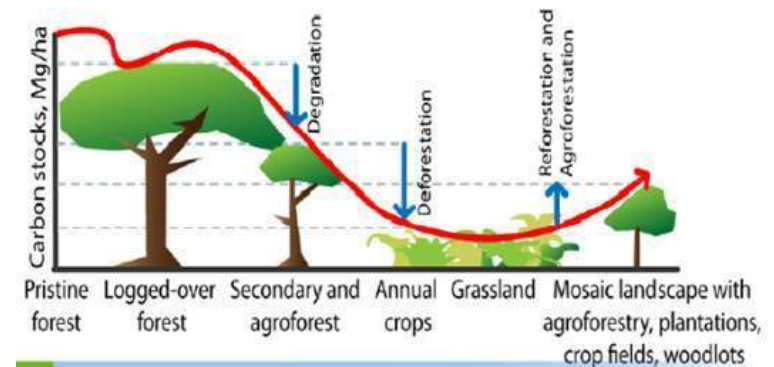
Key land uses

- Closed primary and secondary forests
- Farmland with a large diversity of production systems
 - In particular, agroforestry based on coffee and cocoa, annual crops, and cattle-raising

The landscape



The landscape was (mostly) defined, based on land-uses comprising all the states of the 'forest curve transition'



NOT as a geographic object

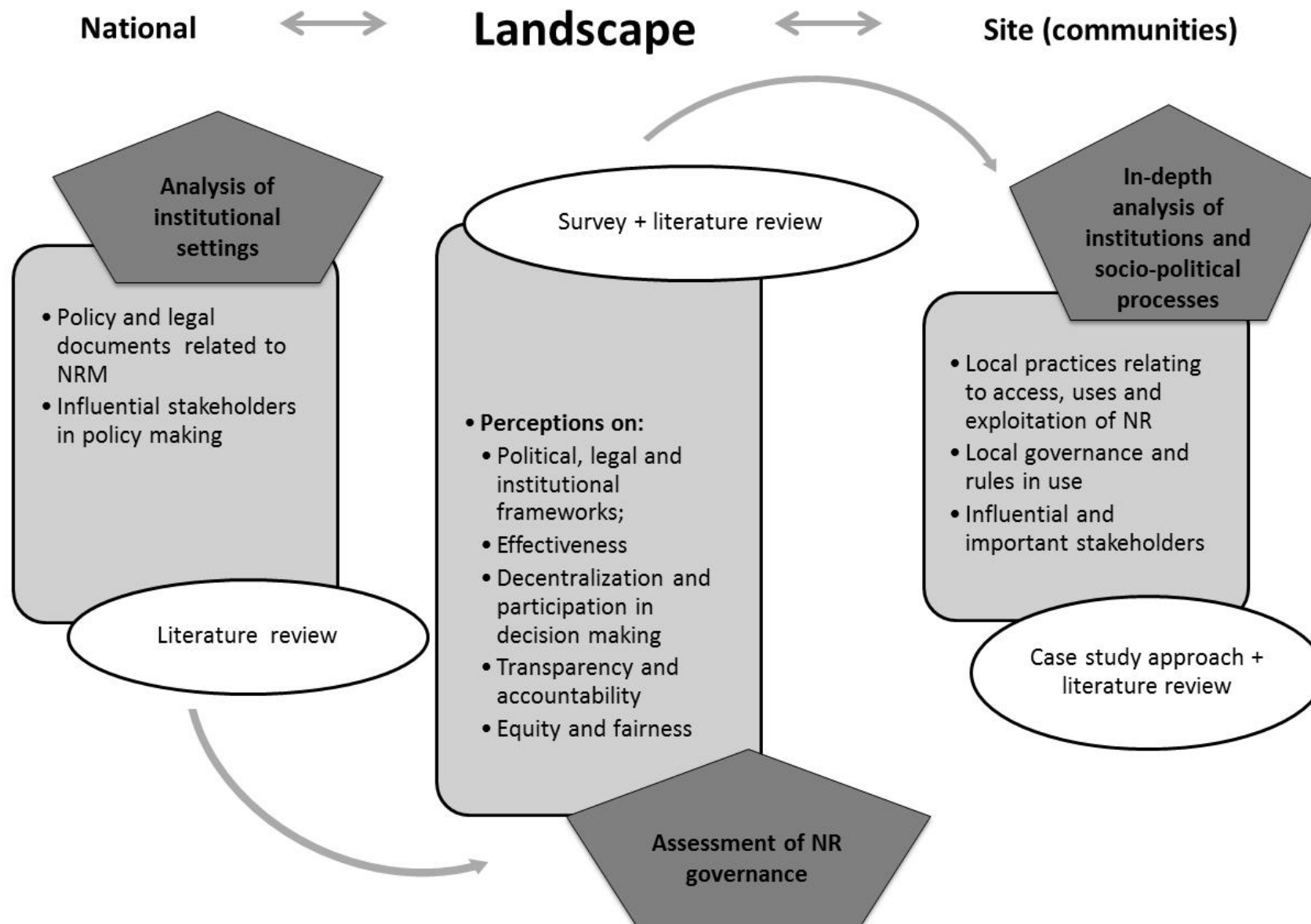
i.e. spatially, historically, politically and socially meaningful

The methodological challenges

- Need to adopt a landscape approach, in particular in order to establish indicators of institutional change
 - Standardized instruments to collect and analyze data at the landscape level
- Need to understand institutions and social practices, which are often very locally 'understandable'
 - Multidimensional, multilevel, with multiple stakeholders



A mixed methods approach



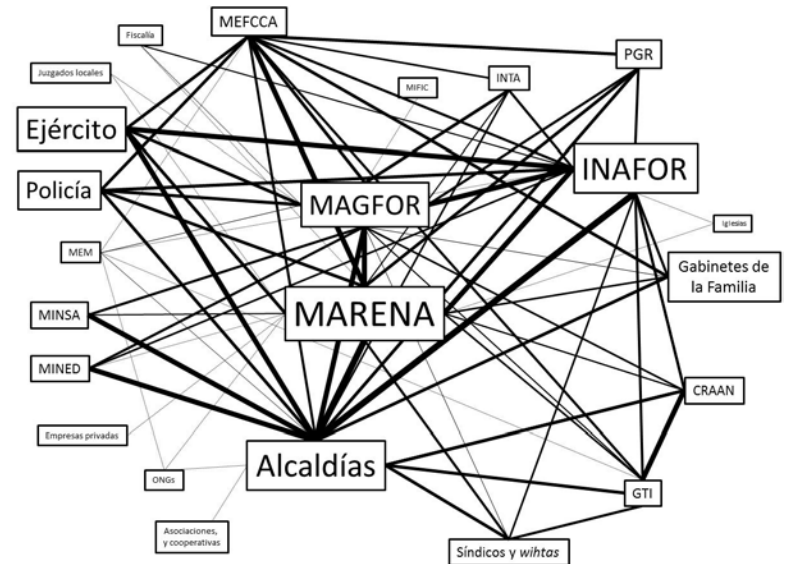


Challenges encountered



Institutional settings

- Two different political and legal systems
 - More than 30 formal laws and regulations relating to NRM
 - About 15-20 public agencies with mandates and responsibilities in NRM
- An heterogeneous NR governance within each country



Example of a map of influential stakeholders in policy making in Nicaragua

Institutional settings

- Mapping 'legitimate' property rights
 - In the absence of Cadaster
 - When illegal land tenure is common
 - When limits of concessions are unclear and subject to serious conflicts, including with the State
- Assessing NR governance from the key stakeholders' perspective
 - Scoring perceptions is not an easy task
 - It cannot tell you about what's really going on at the community and individual level
- Linking an assessment of NR governance 'quality' with ecosystem health?

Local institutional arrangements

- Institutions, rights over NR and governance systems are highly complex
- Many crucial issues are difficult to assess
 - Corruption, drug trafficking, political sensitiveness, etc.
- What locally govern NR mostly refer to individual agencies, including those of external actors
 - But how to up scale results to the landscape?





How relevant
would it be for
Western Ghâts?





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